

Summer Opportunities for Teenagers

Overview

Ideas to help teenagers plan an engaging and rewarding summer.

- Paid work
- Volunteering
- Summer study/research
- Educational and volunteering trips
- Uncovering opportunities
- Making the most of summer opportunities

With the right mix of activities, teenagers can make the summer months a time to grow, learn, and have fun, too. The guidelines and advice here can help you assess the options for a rewarding summer -- from volunteer and paid work to study and travel opportunities.

Paid work

Paying jobs can provide new skills, a sense of responsibility, and, of course, money -- for daily expenses or to save for the future.

Teenagers can find jobs through networking (asking friends to stay alert for jobs) and help-wanted ads, or by asking directly at stores, restaurants, and other businesses. Often businesses post job openings on Internet Web sites, which can be accessed at many public libraries and some schools. It can be helpful to prepare a resume listing skills, accomplishments, and previous work -- including unpaid work.

A teenager may want to continue an after-school or weekend job like babysitting or hourly retail work, expand a job's hours, or combine it with volunteer work. Keep in mind, too, the jobs that become available mostly in the summer months, like lifeguard positions, house painting or yard work, and work at recreation programs.

Other possibilities for paid work include:

- *Self-employment.* This can be a good idea for any teenager, but especially for younger ones who aren't eligible for other jobs. Opportunities include house painting, yard care, babysitting (older teenagers might travel with a family on vacation), pet walking, tutoring, and making and selling crafts. Good ways to advertise include posting fliers on community bulletin boards and passing them out to teachers, friends, and neighbors.
- *Summer camp jobs.* Day camps often welcome high school students as staff members. (Overnight camps tend to prefer older counselors.) Teenagers with special skills can sometimes qualify as instructors in water safety, sports, or other areas. Camps are often sponsored by local Ys, community centers, scout organizations, schools, or religious groups. Some camps offer unpaid positions to high school students as CITs (counselors-in-training), which can provide experience for future paid work as a counselor.

Volunteering

Volunteering can provide the chance to try new activities and areas of interest. It allows teenagers to experience the rewards of helping others, and can provide background valuable to future school and work plans. Here are some possibilities:

- *Be a tutor.* Many schools and libraries offer tutoring programs that pair a teenager with a child who would benefit from tutoring. And some libraries sponsor programs where a teenager is paired to read to a young child. (If your library doesn't have a program like this, you might offer to set one up.) Child care centers can also provide volunteer opportunities for teenagers interested in working with young children.
- *Work on a community-improvement project.* Some communities offer programs that put teenagers to work on clean-up and community-improvement activities. Projects might include working at a park or community center painting, doing carpentry, or simply cleaning up.
- *Create an internship.* Local businesses and non-profit organizations often accept volunteers. Some offer formal internship programs, with an application process and a limited number of placements. Others accept interns on an informal basis. Ask about opportunities at museums, hospitals (including pet hospitals), newspaper companies, radio stations, and City Hall.

Guidance counselors, community centers, and organizations like United Way, the American Red Cross, the local YMCA, YWCA, Jewish Community Center, or Boys and Girls Club can be good sources of information about volunteer opportunities.

Summer study/research

Summer can also offer the opportunity to earn course credits or acquire new academic skills. Options include:

- *High school courses.* These can be a good choice for a teenager who has to make up course work or who wants to change a field of study. Summer courses are often more relaxed than school-year courses and may be a less stressful introduction to a new or difficult subject.
- *College courses.* Many local colleges offer summer programs for qualifying teenagers. Although college courses can be expensive, they often make it possible for high school students to enter college with advance credits. This can mean savings on tuition and expenses in the long run.

Guidance counselors can be a good source of information about study opportunities. You can also call or write directly to local schools and colleges.

Educational and volunteering trips

Summer programs also exist -- at a cost -- for teenagers to combine travel with volunteer work or academic experience. Most last for two or three weeks; some offer course credit. Possibilities include exchange-student programs, biking and camping expeditions, and programs that provide the chance to experience another culture in a foreign country or closer to home. Some programs offer financial assistance.

Program sponsors include:

Council on International Educational Exchange
633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017
212-822-2649
800-407-8839
www.councilexchanges.org
E-mail: work@ciee.org

3 Copley Place, 2nd Floor
Boston, MA 02116
617-247-0350
E-mail: Highschool@councilexchanges.org

Earthwatch Institute
3 Clock Tower Place, Suite 100
Box 75
Maynard, MA 01754
978-461-0081
800-776-0188
www.earthwatch.org
E-mail: info@earthwatch.org

Outward Bound U.S.A.
100 Mystery Point Road
Garrison, NY 10524
866-467-7651
www.outwardbound.org
E-mail: OBNDev@outwardbound.org

Volunteers for Peace
1034 Tiffany Road
Belmont, VT 05730
802-259-2759
www.vfp.org
E-mail: vfp@vfp.org

High school guidance offices and public libraries often have information about programs like these.

Uncovering other opportunities

- *Peterson's Summer Opportunities for Kids and Teenagers* describes over 300 summer activities and programs for teenagers and children. It's available at your library or through the publisher at www.petersons.com.
- Other sponsors of summer programs for teenagers include local school districts; state departments of education; local private and parochial schools, colleges, and universities; and municipal parks and recreation departments.

Making the most of summer opportunities

No matter what summer activity a teenager chooses, documenting it can be rewarding -- and useful, too. Keeping a journal or taking photographs and making an album can help keep memories fresh. Writing down addresses and phone numbers of co-workers, teachers, or camp friends can help make friendships last, and provide a source of references for future activities.